

Math and Fun?!

Believe it or not, Algebra is not abstract, and it can be fun too! It all depends on how you learn it. Mr Gananath of 'Suvidya' is proving this by developing innovative hands-on methods and teaching aids that allow children not just memorize math but also understand it and use it as a tool for life. AID Boston has approved \$1066 (~Rs. 45870/-) to fund a project proposed by Suvidya to - produce 1000 kits with models illustrating math concepts, distribute them among interested schools and conduct workshops to train teachers in using them.

Suvidya began in 1994 as the educational initiative of "SAMUHA", a development agency working in Karnataka. Suvidya aims at promoting innovative ideas to improve the quality of education and classroom interaction. The development of teaching material that can make learning enjoyable has lagged behind the expansion of elementary education in India. Poor quality of instruction is one of the main reasons for high dropout rate and low educational attainment.

Although it is known that children in the age-group of 7-14 years require prior concrete experience to catch abstract concepts, teachers prefer "chalk and talk" methods. No wonder, majority of children suffer from 'Math Phobia', especially those in rural and government run corporation schools. Promoting 'activity based mathematics' is the most effective way to help children cultivate and sustain a love for Math, by encouraging cooperative learning and problem solving among them selves.

The 'Math Lab' that SUVIDYA helps set up in interested schools comprises of a physical and psychological space - where learning occurs through interactive and concrete experimentation. The physical part includes mathematical models, games, puzzles and activities. These models are easy to prepare and can be made with durable and attractive materials. They are multipurpose, often covering more than one concept or even more than one subject.

- Ravi (AID Boston)

AID extends a **warm** welcome to its newest chapter at Portland. AID-Portland gave an auspicious kick off to its activities on August 15, with a 'Candle Light Vigil' and a solemn pledge to alleviate India's poverty. Look out for more AID news & activities from out west!

Adhikaar, a
Bhuvaneshwar (Orissa)
based NGO, has carried



out some pioneering work in the field of women's rights and their social empowerment through organizing Self Help Groups (SHGs), under its 'Thrift and Savings Program'. AID has funded their 3-year project worth \$9000, which proposes to extend this micro-credit program by grouping the 110 SHGs into "Clusters" that would finally form a "Federation" bank called MA (Mahila Adhikaar) bank. This bank would serve as a financial institution, which would facilitate larger loans to the poor at lower interest rates, thus prevent exploitation by local moneylenders. Adhikaar aims to encourage entrepreneurship amongst the local women, as well as improve their financial strength, confidence and social status. According to Md. Amin, the coordinator for Adhikaar and an ex-Ashoka fellow, "Savings is only a plea, it is a means to do many more good things...". Adhikaar and AID, jointly view the MA bank as a 'platform of solidarity' for the women that would not only empower them financially, but also give them a voice in social issues like anti-liquor tirades, price-hikes for land and securing legal rights for women.

- Vajjayanti Gupta (AID San Diego & MD)

Where have the Computers gone?

Tamil Nadu Science Forum (TNSF) and AID are making rapid progress in their efforts to make rural Tamil Nadu computer literate! AID-Boston has taken the lead by already sending 15 computers. As a result, 3 computer centers have already been set up and more are coming up, including Pondicherry, Madras and Nagercoil. The plan is to set up a center in each of the 50 village blocks that TNSF works with. This translates into a requirement of 150 computers, of which at least 50 should be Pentiums. In addition, peripherals and software are needed. While AID has relied on individual volunteers to take computer parts with them when visiting India, bulk shipment options are being explored. The demand is far GREATER than supply.

AID can use help in the form of

- donations of computers and peripherals
- Volunteers to take computers to India

More info/FAQ at <http://www.aidboston.org/cdrive>

- Srinivas (AID Boston)

An Un-common SENSE

SENSE (Self Employment with Normal Secondary Education) provides backward students with free education from the 6th to 10th grade along with several vocational training programs. Prasanna Bharati Vidyaniketan (AP), which coordinates SENSE, was

started by a small group of ladies interested in contributing to their community in their spare time. The project proposes to expand its vocational training program to include computer education and lamination, while also supporting the existing programs of candle making, screen printing and secondary education. The total budget approved is \$4300. Each year, 20 merit students are selected through an entrance exam into the 6th grade. These students are technically trained for free till 10th grade, after which they can either start a small scale unit on their own or continue further studies.

- *Sudhakar (AID Dallas)*

Mech Batch '94 (IIT-Madras) branches out by choosing to contribute as a group towards an AID project!. Starting with "Vanavasi Ashram Trust" reviewed by AID-Boston. They have raised more than \$2000 in US and Rs.10,500 in India. They are also exploring avenues to contribute their expertise to AID.

AID Chapters around the globe report....

AID Penn. State members set up a display table during the **new students orientation** program on Aug 12th and 13th and handed out flyers on AID activities along with "Sankalp"; the AID, SC Fall '99 newsletter. More than 50 students requested and received further information on AID. A special CSH was held to introduce AID activities to the new students, some of whom have already started contributing to the ongoing activities. AID Pen State also organized **its second candle light vigil** in three years; At midnight on the 14th of August, volunteers stood in a semi-circle holding lighted candles marking 52 years of Indian independence. Soma Nag read out an extract from the famous *Tryst with destiny* speech by Jawaharlal Nehru. Aniruddha Vaidya led them in taking a solemn pledge to contribute their efforts towards alleviating poverty in India and introduced the AID song by Prof. Bhagat.

AID Dallas has recently approved a proposal to send a Camcorder to Balaji, AID Chennai. They have also sent 'Intimate Universe' a series of Health video cassettes for TNSF through Meera, AID Bangalore.

AID Columbia held a welcome party to new students on September 18, and discussed AID over sumptuous tea and cookies.

AID Blacksburg "Penny Drive" Pavan Thallapragada got the smart idea of collecting change from donors for AID! Having already raised \$300 from 20 donors, the penny drive is still going strong! Volunteers collect change, count it, and exchange it with the bank for \$ bills.

AID-San Diego has started off a book drive. Participation in a local event and an appeal in the local temple's newsletter helped make it a success. Books being given away at the end of the school year were also obtained from a local school. The chapter hopes to initiate similar book drives in India to get books in regional languages. A volunteer is designing children's picture books.

AID Boston is giving new meaning to the old adage **To See is to Believe**, with their ongoing film series with ASHA-MIT, every Sunday from 4-6:30 p.m. in 4-231, MIT. The films are usually followed by half an hour discussion on the topic. The films in local languages have English subtitles. Please contact Vinay at vkumar@ai.mit.edu

The films screened so far are:

LAGE JIVA GHAR GHAR (Marathi)

ODHNI (Hindi)

THE YOUNG WORKERS

-All the above 3 by Tata Institute of Social Sciences

KAMALA AND RAJI

- by Self-Employed Women's Assoc. SEWA

SEEDS OF PLENTY, SEEDS OF SORROW

-A film by Manjira Datta for BBC

ROGER AND ME

Mark your Calendar!

November 14 AID Boston is organizing a **Children's Mela**. They will be collecting toys/books etc. for Kids in India.

Association for India's Development (US& UK) and AID-India rely solely on your contributions to support developmental projects in India. Please donate generously. Visit <http://www.aidindia.org> or email info@aidindia.org for more info on AID.

USA (Tax ID no 52-1863480)

By **credit card**, please call (301) 513 0565

By **check**, send in favor of AID to Association for India's Development PO Box 149 College Park, MD 20741 Family and Friends in India? Remind them about AID-India (has 80-G) AH-250 Ratna Apts, Shanti Colony, Anna Nagar Chennai 600 040 aid@vsnl.com

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